

AWW

Paragon Heritage Statement

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Architect

AWW

Introduction

Summary

Project name:
The Paragon

Location:
32 Victoria Street, Bristol
BS1 6BY

AWW has been commissioned to undertake an interior design and alongside review the access to the building from Counterslip. The building is known as The Paragon on Victoria Street, Bristol. The document aims to assess the heritage context, significance and sensitivities relating to The Paragon in order to assess the possible impacts of works to upgrade the building.

The works comprise the addition of a canopy by the main entrance of the building, general internal refurbishment and changes on the basement layout. The proposed works look to upgrade the building and will help ensure its ongoing long term use as high quality premises fit for the requirements of 21st century tenants.

The report has assessed the heritage value of the building. The assessment of impact of the proposed works are felt to be of no harm to the significance of the heritage assets as a result of the works to the entrance elevation.

It is also felt that the proposed works do not impact on the character and appearance of nearby heritage assets, and thus the significance of the City of Bristol and the Conservation Area where the building sits.

Introduction

In October 2023, AWW was commissioned to undertake a Heritage Assessment of the building known as The Paragon on Victoria Street, Bristol (hereafter referred to as the 'Building'). The property comprises a large office building, with a reception open area at ground floor level.

The heritage assessment has been commissioned to understand the heritage sensitivities and constraints relating to plans to refurbish the building, to redesign and upgrade the reception area by the main entrance and to add a canopy on the exterior of the building. The latter modernisation will result in some alterations to the interior on Basement floor and Ground floor level, and to the exterior by the main entrance door.

The building is within Bristol Conservation Area 19, Redcliffe. It occupies a prominent position on a busy centre junction of two primary routes within the City Centre of Bristol, between Counterslip and Victoria Street, near Castle Park. It is situated in close proximity to one of the landmark buildings of the area, Church of St Thomas, a medieval tower that dominates views along St Thomas Lane.

Objectives of this assessment

The purpose of this report is to firstly gain a full understanding of the Building, including its significance, its development and its built environment context. This includes any contribution it may make to the character and appearance of Redcliffe Conservation Area and the special interest of the adjacent listed and non-designated buildings, in order to achieve an understanding of the heritage sensitivities of the Building and its capacity for change. This will inform an assessment of how, and to what extent the proposed works may affect the significance of both designated and non-designated heritage assets and the conservation area.

The 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment' (Historic England 2015) clarifies that a desk-based assessment should:

'...determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area, and the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the historic environment, or will identify the need for further evaluation' (Historic England 2015, 3).



Stride Treglown

Introduction

Statute, Policy & guidance context

The Building is located in the local planning authority of Bristol City Council. A new Local Plan, the Bristol Development Framework is being developed, underpinned by an adopted Core Strategy document (2011) and a Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan (2014).

Throughout the text, the applicable provisions contained within the following statutes, policies and guidance documents are referred to and discussed as relevant:

- A detailed character appraisal has been produced for Redcliffe Conservation Area and informs part of the assessment within this report. It includes historic regression and management proposals.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) provides the English government's national planning policies and describes how these are expected to be applied within the planning system. Heritage is subject of Chapter 16.
- Bristol Development Framework (Core Strategy and other documents) comprises the local development plan, as required to be compiled, published and maintained by the local authority, consistent with the requirements of the NPPF (2019).



Introduction

Methodology

The assessments presented in this report are informed by:

- A review of historic maps of the site of the Building, accessed via the Know Your Place online resource and from Bristol City Council webpages.
- Several site visits were conducted from September to October 2023 and there was sufficient access to the Building and its surroundings to undertake a basic exterior inspection of the Building and the local context, including the proximate listed buildings, the wider listed buildings and the key views within the conservation area.
- The Character Appraisal produced by the City Council for Redcliffe Conservation Area.

The significance of designated heritage assets that may be affected by the proposed development has been assessed and described, in accordance with NPPF (2019).

Determination of significance has been undertaken according to the industrystandard guidance on assessing heritage value provided within 'Conservation Principles' (Historic England 2008). This approach considers heritage significance to derive from a combination of discrete heritage values, principal amongst which are: i) evidential (archaeological) value, ii) historic (illustrative and associative) value, iii) aesthetic value, iv) communal value, amongst others.

Levels of effect

The present report sets out, in detail, the ways in which identified susceptible heritage assets might be affected by changes to the Building, as well as the anticipated extent of any such effects.

Identified effects upon heritage assets have been defined within broad 'level of effect' categories. These are consistent with key national heritage policy and guidance terminology, particularly that of the NPPF (2019). This has been done in order to improve the intelligibility of the assessment results for purposes of quick reference and ready comprehension. These broad determinations of level of effect should be viewed within the context of the qualifying discussions of significance and impact presented in this report.

Levels of effect

Summary of level of effect categories (benefit and harm) referred to in this report in relation to heritage assets, and the applicable statute and policy:

- **Heritage benefit:** The proposals would better enhance or reveal the heritage significance of the heritage asset. Enhancing or better revealing the significance of a heritage asset is a desirable development outcome in respect of heritage. Policy: NPPF (2019) paragraphs 185 and 200.
- **No harm:** The proposals would preserve the significance of the heritage asset. Policies: S66 and S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990); NPPF(2019) paragraph 185.
- **Less than substantial harm (lower end):** The proposals would be anticipated to result in a restricted level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset, such that the asset's contributing heritage values would be largely preserved. Policies: NPPF(2019) paragraphs 196 and 197; S7, S66 and S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990).
- **Less than substantial harm (upper end):** The proposals would lead to a notable level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset. A reduced, but appreciable, degree of its heritage significance would remain. Policies: NPPF(2019) paragraphs 196 and 197; S7, S66 and S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990).
- **Substantial harm:** The proposals would very much reduce the heritage asset's significance or vitiate that significance altogether. Policies: NPPF (2019) paragraphs 193-197; S7, S66 and S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990); Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979).

Historic Context



Historic Context

Redcliffe Conservation Area

A Conservation Area is ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ (Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990). There are currently 33 Conservation Areas in Bristol. The Paragon is located within Redcliffe Conservation Area. The Council will determine if any development on these areas will have a positive, neutral or negative impact, and its acceptability.

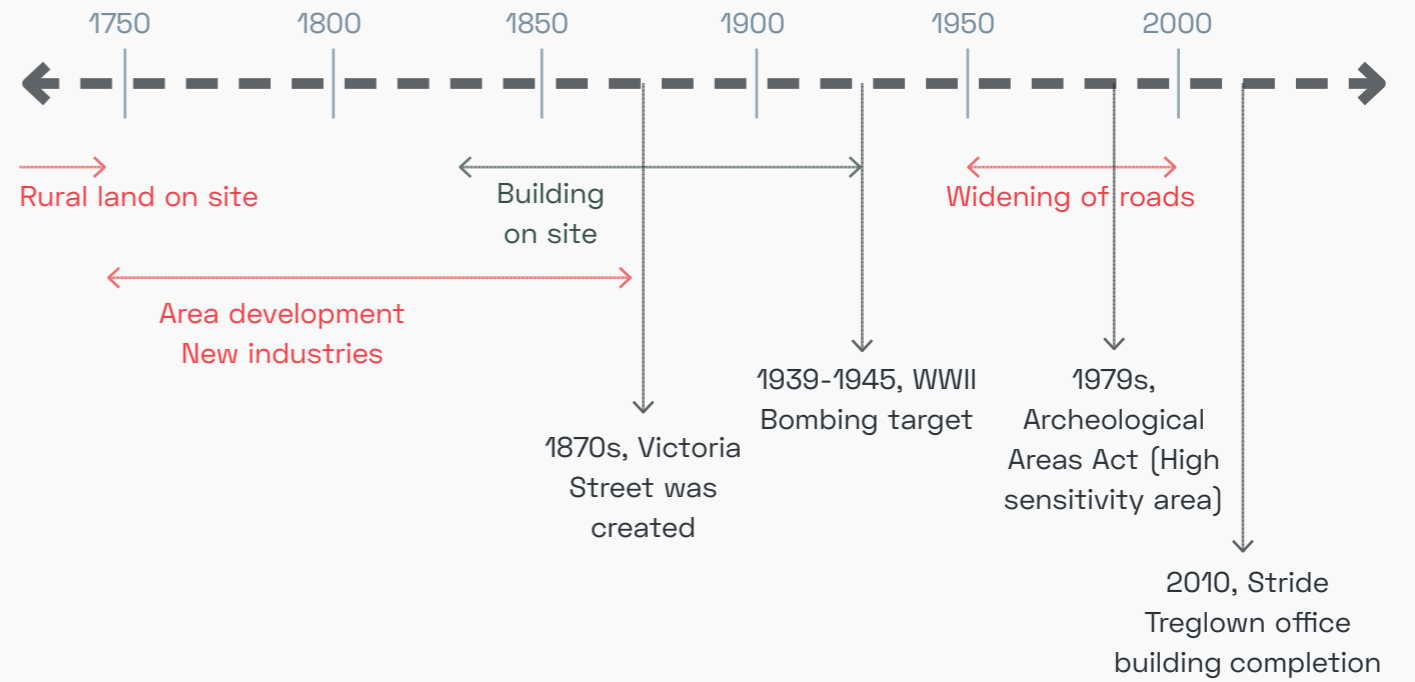
Redcliffe is located towards the heart of Bristol, on an island bounded by the Floating Harbour to the north and west and by the River Avon (New Cut) to the South.

Bristol has Saxon origins, and became a prominent city 3.1. by the 14th century, much due to its strategic position on the Bristol Channel and on the wide navigable river Avon. It was the second wealthiest town in England after London, and was made a county borough in 1373 by Royal Charter. It became a city in 1542 when St. Augustine’s Abbey became the cathedral, and trade with the newly discovered America catalysed Bristol’s merchant heyday.

The slave trade dominated Bristol’s commercial activities during the 17th and 18th centuries, along with a significant amount of maritime and commercial industry. The position of Redcliffe makes it a pivotal area in linking the south of Bristol with the City Centre across the Floating Harbour. The Paragon is located in the northern portion, which has a largely commercial/dockside character, dominated by Victorian warehouses and later 20th century buildings that directly front the streets or edge of the Floating Harbour.

The area suffered greatly during the second world war and new road layouts and largescale 20th century buildings have significantly altered the area’s historic framework and traditional character. Many glass or concrete blocks have appeared in the area north of Redcliffe Way.

The range of buildings, from St Mary Redcliffe to postWar housing estates, reflect the development of the area from vibrant port, to merchants’residential quarter, and home to industry. Despite changes over the past 60 years, Redcliffe retains much of its historic grain and built fabric. It is the variety of the area that contributes to Redcliffe’s unique sense of vitality and interest.



Victoria Street circa 1880

Historic Context

Redcliffe Conservation Area

Settlement in most of Redcliffe and Temple began in the early 12th century. Redcliffe only formally became part of the County of Bristol in 1373.

During the 13th and 14th centuries the area's association with the port allowed the development of industry.

The 16th century saw the growth of new industries associated with the port including the importation of sugar, tobacco, coffee and other luxury goods produced with enslaved labour from the colonies.

Prosperity continued in the 17th and 18th Centuries with Potteries and Glass furnaces.

At the beginning of the 19th century locks were constructed on the River Avon to create the Floating Harbour. The New Cut was excavated to the south of Redcliffe and Temple, separating the area from Bedminster. During the 19th century, the areas fronting the Floating Harbour were subject to much new development with the construction of new warehouses.

In the 1870s a new street, Victoria Street, was pushed through the existing topography to create a vehicular and tram link between the city centre and Temple Meads Station. The Paragon building is situated in the junction between Victoria Street and Counterslip.

The concentration of industry caused Redcliffe to be a bombing target during the Second World War.

In the later part of the twentieth century Redcliffe's development was shaped by the widening of roads and the construction of a new bridge



Historic 1350 map.



Jon Rocques map, 1742.



Ashmeads map, 1832.



Ordnance Survey map, 1880s.

Historic Context

Description of the building

The Paragon building is situated in Victoria Street, Bristol, an area currently experiencing a resurgence of interest.

It is a prominent office building that provides approx 7,000m² of flexible accommodation divided in 6 storeys. The facilities include:

- Secure basement parking, showers and changing spaces with direct access to the reception area at ground floor level through the lifts
- Retail units at ground level
- A full height atrium providing natural daylight to the office areas, providing a waiting area with seats at ground floor level as well
- An external terrace at penthouse level, making the most of extensive views of the city
- A double height reception area featuring a polished concrete tile floor, polished plaster wall finishes and a steel and glass staircase

The building was completed in 2010. It achieved a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating and was sold by Cubex to an institutional investor.

The Paragon faces another modern building. North Redcliffe area is characterised by its fine urban grain occasionally broken by key historic buildings or by postWar developments.

The property is one of the larger scaled buildings occupying wider plots, located along the main arteries (such as Victoria Street) or along edge of the Floating Harbour.

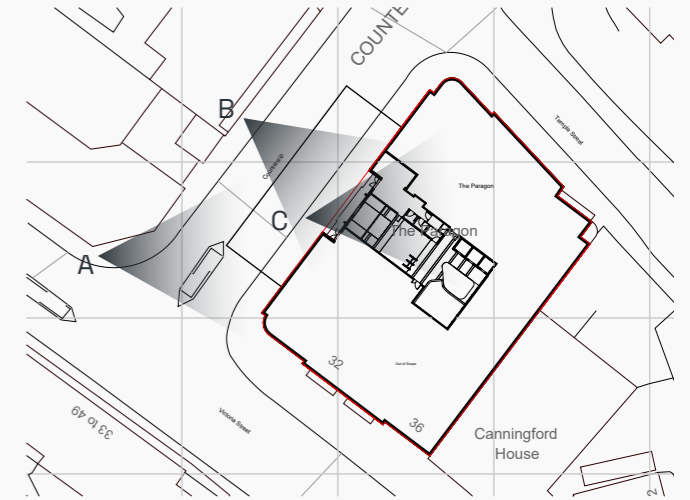


Stride Treglown

Historic Context

Description of the building

The building's main entrance is recessed from the pavement at Counterslip, providing a wide outdoor space. This means our proposed works won't interfere with the existing pavement at all, respecting its width and maintaining the existing building footprint.



A - Victoria Street view

From the crossing between Victoria Street and Counterslip we can appreciate the building entrance. It is clear from the building composition where the main access is.



B - Entrance facade

From the other side of the road looking at The Paragon main entrance we can see two existing trees of approx 7m height.

We can also notice the symmetric composition of the facade, with glazed surfaces and panelling mixed with brickwork on upper floors and stone at ground floor level.



C - Entrance door

The Paragon main entrance door is a sliding glazed door within a curtain wall that leads into the lobby of the main reception area.

It has a panel on the top and is covered by a glazed floor at first floor level.

Signage is located on the wall that forms the building setback. A secondary entrance door is also visible to the left of the main door.

Proposal effects



Proposal effects

The setting of heritage assets

This section considers potential non-physical effects 5.1. upon the significance of susceptible heritage assets within the Buildings' environs. Non-physical effects are those that derive from changes to the setting of heritage assets as a result of new development. Those assets identified as potentially susceptible to non-physical impact, and thus subject to more detailed assessment, are discussed in greater detail within the remainder of this section.

Step 1: Identification of heritage assets potentially affected

Second Edition of Historic England's 2017 'Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3' (GPA3):

'identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected'.

The assessment of the local heritage context, underpinned by the site walkover, identified several heritage assets whose significance may be impacted by changes to their setting as a result of the proposed development; these are:

- 10 Victoria Street, building opposite to the development's main entrance. Some of this building's facade features and materiality match The Paragon building and therefore the overall street appearance could be affected.
- Counterslip is one of the secondary routes/spaces in Redcliffe Conservation Area. Its appearance could be affected by external changes of the building.

Steps 2 and 3: Assessment of setting and potential effects of the development

These steps consider the contribution that setting makes to the significance of potentially susceptible heritage assets. This is understood by assessing the physical surrounds of the asset and by assessing the 'experience' of the asset within its setting.

Then they consider how, if at all, and to what extent any anticipated changes to the setting of those assets, as a result of development to the Building, will affect the significance of the identified heritage assets. The proposed development comprises:

- Reconfiguration of the basement floor layout, refurbishing the shower and changing facilities and providing a larger area for lockers and drying spaces, including a disabled shower and WC. These works are not visible from the outside of the building and therefore they will not have an impact in the heritage assets close to the building.
- Enhancement and interior design for the reception area on ground floor level. These works are not visible from the outside of the building and therefore they will not have an impact in the heritage assets close to the building.
- Canopy for the building's main entrance. This will be an addition to the exterior of the building and therefore will have potential effects on the development.



10 Victoria Street

This building has brickwork details that could be of heritage importance for the area. The materials mostly match The Paragon building.



Counterslip

A change on the Paragon building's main entrance could have an effect on the overall look of the street, which is of historical importance as a route.

Proposal effects

The setting of heritage assets

Steps 2 and 3: Assessment of setting and potential effects of the development

Even if the setting out of the facade can be used to identify a potential access to the building, the existing building entrance has poor street visibility from a Counterslip pedestrian point of view. There is a lack of identity in the approach.

There is an issue with the water run off as well, as there is no weather protection directly above the entrance apart from a glazing building feature on first floor level that stands out from the facade setback.

Our aim is to create a welcoming entrance to the building increasing the visibility from the street. New external signage will be proposed to create an identity, with new finishes and lighting throughout the reception, in order to update the look and create a comfortable journey through the building.

This journey starts as the users approach the building from Counterslip. A canopy by the entrance will create that protection and sense of arrival that we're looking for. The canopy will respect the existing setting out of the facade, matching also the materiality with the same colour as the panels and framing for the glazing around it. New signage will be respectful with the existing building features. The rainwater issue will be resolved as well, proposing a drainage strategy for the canopy.

The canopy will be seen for pedestrians approaching the building, as well as from upper floors windows of the building opposite, 10 Victoria Street.

The works will slightly alter the visual scene of the street but they will not alter the overall character of the building or the surroundings.

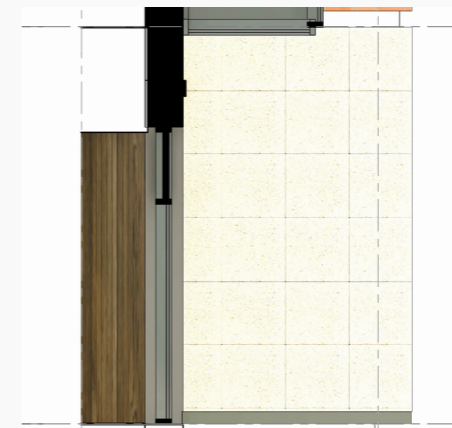


Planning - Canopy Elevation - Existing
1 : 25



Planning - Canopy Elevation - Proposed
1 : 25

Signage location - shown indicatively and final proposal subject to separate application



Planning - Canopy Section - Existing
1 : 25



Planning - Canopy Section - Proposed
1 : 25

Proposal effects

Conservation Area Impact Assessment

The Paragon building is not noted as a 'landmark building' in the character appraisal for the Redcliffe Conservation area.

It is part of two 'long views', from Victoria Street looking towards the river, and from Counterslip looking down on the opposite side of the block. These are to be noted as important views to preserve and they are of special interest for the Conservation Area.

The main building's entrance is not located along any of these views, and therefore small exterior changes won't affect their significance.

The area is characterised by tall office modern buildings and urban wide streets with some trees of importance, featuring some landmark buildings in the near surroundings of the building but not directly visible from the entrance. The lack of visibility means the canopy works won't have an impact in the appearance of any of these buildings or their surroundings.

The proposals here described will be of no harm for the heritage assets surrounding the building and they will have no impact on the Conservation area of Redcliffe.



Front view of canopy

The canopy respects the current facade features of The Paragon building.



Approach from west

View approaching the proposed works from Victoria Street junction.



Approach from east

View of the proposed canopy and entrance glazing from the Counterslip east side.

Proposal effects

Physical development effects

The report has established that the proposed works will not result in any harm to the significance of heritage assets through alteration of their setting.

It remains to assess the impact of the proposals on the significance of the Building.

The proposed works to the main entrance of the building will result in a change to the appearance of the facade.

This will be visible on public views as pedestrians approach the building. It will not be impacting long views or the overall appearance of the street.

The materials chosen for the proposal will match the existing building.

The canopy will be located in a building setback and will not affect or cover the footprint of the street pavement, therefore it will result in no harm to the special interest of the area.



Proposal effects

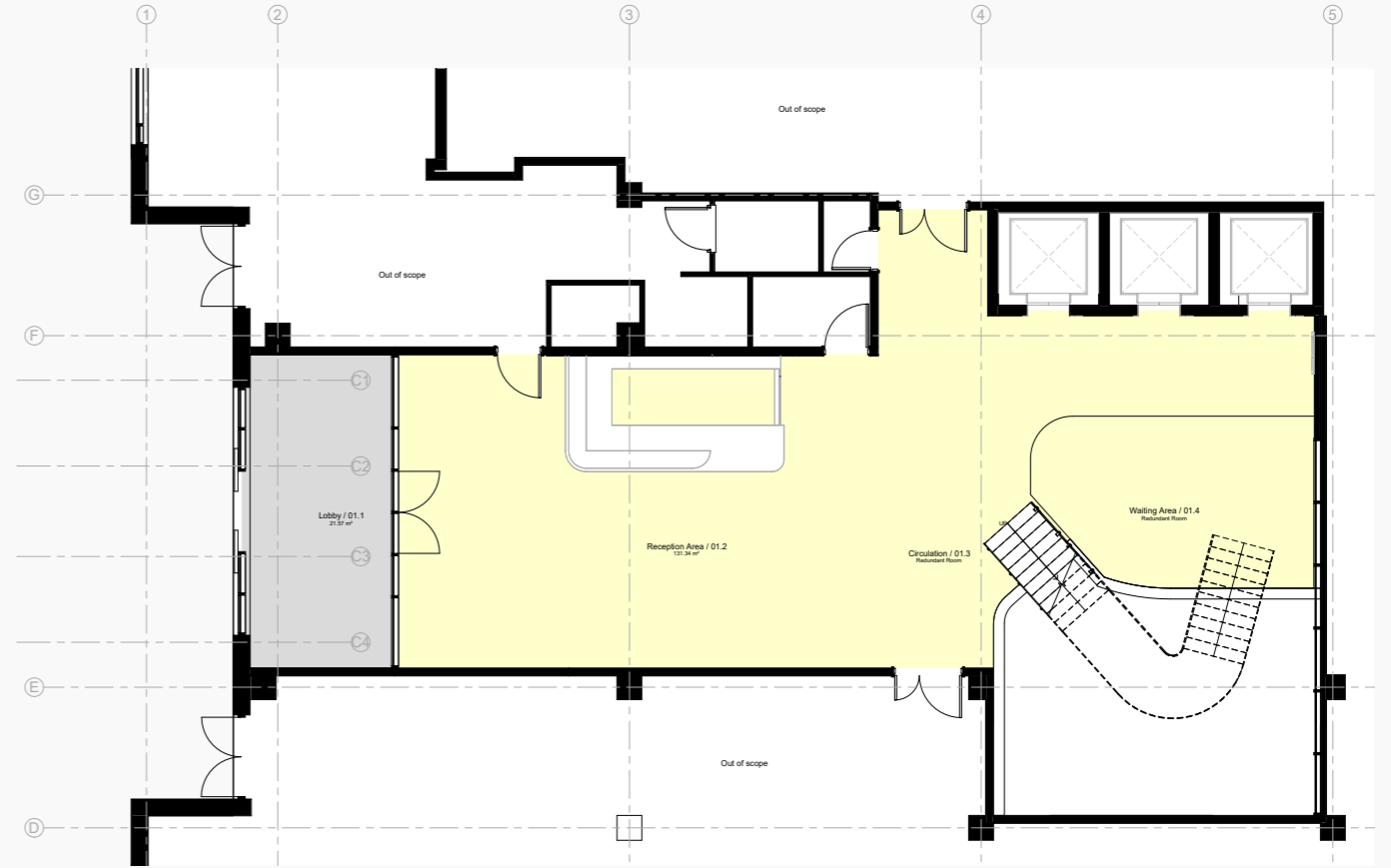


Physical development effects

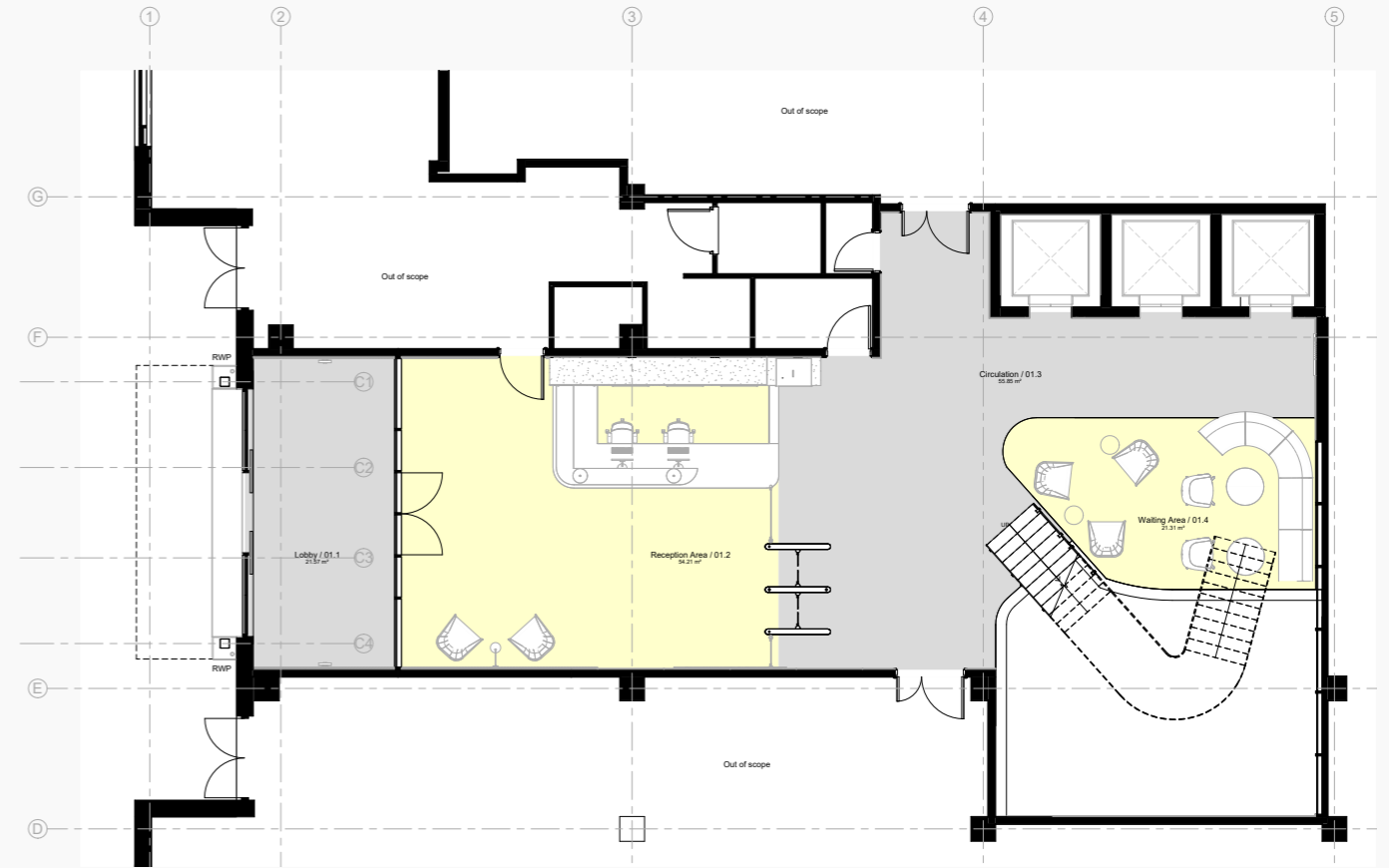
The new glazing on The Paragon building's main entrance to the reception area will maintain the existing dimensions.

The canopy will be included as part of the proposed works as shown in the plans, with two small columns on both sides of the glazing for both drainage and structural support.

These will be the only alterations on plan. The canopy will not go further than the main building boundary, only occupying the setback space.



Existing Ground Floor Reception area



Proposed Ground Floor Reception area

Conclusion

This report presents the findings of a heritage assessment of the Building known as The Paragon, Victoria Street in Bristol.

The assessment has been produced to understand the heritage constraints and sensitivities relating to proposals for the refurbishment and upgrade of the building, which include the addition of a canopy by the main entrance of the building, general internal refurbishment and changes on the basement layout.

The building sits within the Redcliffe Conservation Area, and its surroundings have historic and archeological interest. The Paragon is not designated as a 'landmark building', but it sits between two 'long views' defined on the area's character appraisal.

Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that 'effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account when determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect a nondesignated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be required having regard for the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset'. Such a judgement would also include the benefits of proposals which result in sustainable solutions which secure the long term future of the heritage asset as a high quality office building.

This assessment has concluded that there would be no non-physical heritage impacts as a result of the proposed work in relation to the setting of potentially susceptible heritage assets.

This assessment has also concluded that, due to the interior works not being visible from the public realm, and the exterior works being beneficial for the quality of the building and its long term use, there is no significant change to the character and appearance of the area and therefore no harm to its significance.



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